

THE TRANSPORTATION LINK



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**Luz Araoz
Hopewell**
*Director of the
Office of Small and
Disadvantaged
Business Utilization*

The Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) works closely with small, woman-owned and disadvantaged businesses on a daily basis. In this edition of the *Transportation Link* we are very pleased to highlight five small businesses that have graduated from the Small Business Administration's 8(a) program. We are especially proud of these firms because they have each worked with the U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) to build a safer transportation system for the 21st century.

As you read the success story for each of these firms, I hope you will be able to learn some new ideas on how to expand your business in the future. I hope you will also find their stories inspirational. I know I did. These are just a few of the 8(a) businesses that have worked with DOT in the past and have gone on to achieve higher and higher levels of success in both the public and private sectors.

Recently the Department of Transportation and the Small Business Administration signed a Memorandum of Understanding that will help small socially and economically disadvantaged firms that want to do business with the government – by streamlining the certification for disadvantaged businesses. I am very pleased that this agreement can help so many of the businesses OSDBU works with. It is wonderful when government agencies join together to achieve our common goal to assist small and disadvantaged businesses.

Successful 8(a) Graduates

The U.S. Department of Transportation (DOT) Office of Small and Disadvantaged Business Utilization (OSDBU) starts the new year, the new century, and a countdown to the next millennium with a glance back at some of the success stories in the Section 8(a) Business Development Program. The five businesses represent a cross-section of OSDBU efforts: two are women-owned, one was started by a Native American, one by a Hispanic, one by an African-American, and two of the entrepreneurs are Asian-American. At least two are prior DOT Minority Enterprise Development (MED Week) Award Winners. The following five different businesses, five very different people, and five distinct corporate cultures, yet one common goal, show the way to a future for other small and disadvantaged businesses.

CEEXEC, Inc. and Douglas C. Rhodes

CEEXEC, Incorporated received its certification in the 8(a) program based upon the Native American heritage of its President and CEO, Douglas C. Rhodes. He is a member of the Cherokee Nation of Oklahoma, who established his professional information services enterprise in 1976. Graduated from the 8(a) program in 1993, CEEXEC is the "senior" of the five examples of companies successfully making the transition from the 8(a) program. Today, CEEXEC employs approximately 300 people



Douglas C. Rhodes

with 4 branch offices and project staff in 18 states. Its headquarters office is in Dulles, Virginia.



CEEXEC is an information technology solutions and services company. The company's mission is to help its clients use technology to reduce costs, improve effectiveness, and achieve strategic goals. CEEXEC enhances business environments by delivering a combination of business consulting services and leading edge technologies. CEEXEC specializes in: design and implementation of secure networks using VPN and Digital Signature technologies; development of Web-enabled applications using thin client architectures; electronic document management; and acquisition process re-engineering.

CEEXEC has provided support services to the Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) for 17 years and today the FAA is CEEXEC's largest customer. One example of CEEXEC's work with the FAA is the information technology services provided for over ten years under the Logistics Master Automation Plan (LOGMAP).

CEEXEC has received numerous awards for profitable growth, financial stability, and outstanding performance. Recent awards include 1997 and 1998 U.S. Postal Service Point of Service One Support Awards, 1997 Department of the Interior Minority Enterprise Contractor of the Year

OSDBU

Office of Small
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Business Utilization

wants to hear from you!! Call us toll-free at 1 800 532-1169 with questions or comments about this newsletter or our web site. The Transportation Link's content may be reprinted without permission.

Award, and 1996-1997 Department of State Passport Services Award for public service and private sector partnership excellence. In 1989, CEXEC received the DOT's Outstanding Minority Enterprise Business Award.

CEXEC conscientiously focused its efforts while in the 8(a) program, and continues to do so, serving a mix of public and private sector customers. According to CEXEC representatives, the company identified its "niche" within the rapidly growing and expanding technology world and focused on serving that niche. Once it achieved financial stability, it worked hard to maintain that stability. CEXEC credits its smooth and successful transition from the 8(a) Program to this concentration. CEXEC advises other 8(a) participants not to "overspend their financial resources" or to "overcommit staff" as they work toward their goals.

For more information on CEXEC, contact:

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13921 Park Center Road
Dulles, Virginia 20171
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<http://www.cexec.com>

User Technology Associates Group (UTA) and Yong K. Kim

Yong K. Kim started User Technology Associates Group (UTA) in 1985 adopting for its motto "Closing the gap between the user and technology."® Mr. Kim requires that his personnel "focus on the user." He reflects that focus in the name of his company. UTA now consists of approximately 900 employees and is headquartered in Arlington, Virginia. In terms of numbers of employees, UTA is the largest of these success stories.



Yong K. Kim



UTA creates web applications, tailored to need and specializes in software development; informational technology systems; logistics and acquisitions program management, among other efforts. However, from its beginning, UTA concentrated on managing each contract uniquely. The solution was to be as user-friendly as possible. Each contract led to a broadening of the corporate horizon and increased skills. Affiliated companies were created as UTA branched out into private sector work, and they in turn formed joint ventures to address specific operational needs. Each contract was special, but each led to an increased structure of service capability.

UTA's early days as an 8(a) firm were marked by projects such as providing financial system support to the DOT Office of the Secretary. Currently, UTA is working with the Federal Aviation Administration to further flight safety by developing a system to allow the FAA to track and enforce requirements mandating the use of authorized parts for aircraft maintenance.

User Technology Associates Group was a 1995 SBA Small Business of the Year and received the SBA Administrator's Award for Excellence among its many other awards and recognition. It has been recognized for three consecutive years by Inc. 500 as among the fastest growing private companies in the United States.

User Technology Associates Group reports having managed its transition from the 8(a) program smoothly, continuing and expanding many of their Government associations and contracts (more frequently as a prime contractor) while adding private sector business. Company personnel state that this smooth transition happened because of Mr. Kim's personal focus on the

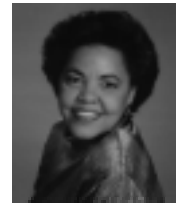
user and his ability to capitalize on each success as it came. UTA did not, on receiving certification by the 8(a) Program, "hunker down," but rather used its five years in the program to constantly broaden its horizons.

For more information on UTA, contact:

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Aegir Systems and Ella Williams

Aegir Systems, in addition to being a highly personal operation, is one of the oldest in terms of its continuing successful record following graduation from the Program. Ella Williams, President and CEO



Ella Williams

of Aegir, makes no bones about why Aegir Systems is a success: it's all due to Williams' mother and the values instilled in her at a young age - to believe in herself and that all things are possible. Ms. Williams, who has recently returned from Stuttgart, Germany, where she was asked to take part in a motivational seminar sponsored for 1500 German women to encourage them into small business efforts, is demonstrably the reason Aegir has grown.

It all began with an idea on recycling cans from Ms. Williams, a divorced mother of three working from her kitchen, into a firm employing almost 100 people which offers engineering services in the transportation, security and defense arenas. She says that happened because her mother instilled in her a commitment to service and self-confidence, making her believe in her own intrinsic potential.

Aegir, now a full-service engineering consulting firm, has contracts with the Departments of Defense, Transportation

and with such other firms as LTK, Booz-Allen & Hamilton and Sverdrup. Some of these are those retained from its time in the 8(a) program, some new.

Ms. Williams is central to Aegir; they seem to be alter egos in many respects. The company mirrors her personal drive and convictions. She was named one of "The nation's Ten Most Admired Women Managers of 1993" by Working Woman magazine. And, the same year AT&T dubbed her "The 1993 Entrepreneur of the Year," while she was recently voted "Business Person of the Year" by readers of the Business Digest.

Ms. Williams says that without the 8(a) Program there is "no way I would be in business today." The Program showed her how to get on the military bases, how to get a contract, and how to build relationships and demonstrate abilities. Then, she said, it was up to her to deliver, and she capitalized on herself. "Everything I knew,



I used it!" Lacking funds for an advertising campaign when she started, she baked cookies and cakes and used them to get her foot in the door. She sent valentine cards to clients to keep her company memorable. But, she says, there were no guarantees produced by achieving certification in the 8(a) program; she had to make it on her own through performance.

Ms. Williams believes strongly that there is "no way, anyone gets ahead alone." But, she says, it is also true that each person needs to know his or her personal power base and use it. Capitalize on what might have been seen as a weakness to make it a strength. "Mine is my femininity." According to Ms. Williams, her "success" route and that of Aegir is her business philosophy. "It's all really about community and family."

She knew from her personal history that she - hence her company - could not afford to sit still, to be dependent. So, years before the transition from the 8(a) program time limits, she began to work on new, non-governmental contracts as well as

positioning herself to be able to compete to hold her existing business when she graduated from the 8(a) program.

Ms. Williams says that her business has continued to grow and improve since her graduation from the 8(a) program in 1995 - and, she adds, she has been able to help a great many people along the way, enabling them to begin giving back to their communities too.

In October, Ms. Williams returns to Stuttgart for another seminar to motivate German women to enter the small business, entrepreneurial world.

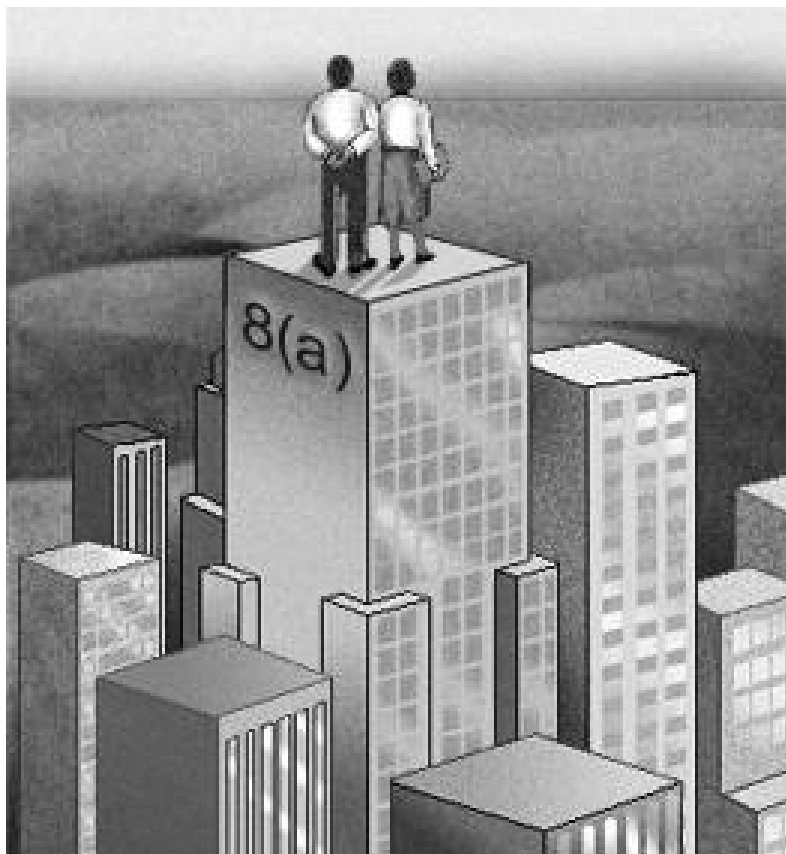
*...without the 8(a) Program
there is "no way I would be
in business today."*

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*Soza & Company, Ltd.
under its founder, William
Soza*

Soza & Company, Ltd. (SOZA) presents another special example for the Small Business Administration's 8(a) Program. William Soza had a successful firm performing certified public accounting



Reaching your dreams is in sight...

services, founded in 1969, but he wanted to position himself and his company to broaden his service base and expand. His



William Soza

goal was to make SOZA a full-service consulting operation. To do so, as a Hispanic, he took advantage of the platforms available to the Company through the 8(a) program and its certification. SOZA, was in the program from 1989 until it graduated in 1997. Today, they offer financial and business management services, information resource management and operations, solutions design and implementation, and program analysis and support to business executives and managers, private sector associations, and political leaders with a global presence having 11 offices including ones in Europe, Puerto Rico and the Middle East. After a history of support work with the U.S. Department of Transportation, Soza has a continuing long-term contract with the U.S. Coast Guard for port safety and general support.

The company used its first two years to build infrastructure. William Soza had a strategic plan entering the Program, and SOZA stuck to that plan. The capital value of the company increased 900% during the eight years it was 8(a) certified. SOZA grew while using primarily its own funds to support and sustain that growth and with assistance from its bank. The advice from Soza is: before entering the 8(a) Program, plan; during the program, use careful fiscal control and avoid the temptation to expand beyond the capability to deliver. Most importantly, retain enough working capital to fund natural growth internally with minimal reliance on credit or paying yourself bigger shares from the business once success is apparent.

Soza & Company views its transition as wholly successful. In the two years since its graduation, revenues grew from \$52,000,000 to \$92,000,000. The key as

Soza & Company sees it to that successful transition is two-fold: first, the high standards of the company and their commitment to living up to their motto - "Your success is our business." Second, Soza & Company has recognized that its principle asset is its high performing employees, whose reputation for delivery of the results needed with utmost ethical standards attracts and retains clients. Soza & Company feels that it is important that those who enable it and its clients to succeed receive the respect they deserve and share in the rewards they earn.

Soza & Company is ranked by Inc. Magazine as one of the 500 fastest growing private companies in the United States, and the company and Mr. Soza have received considerable public recognition for their achievements. Washington Technology



Magazine for 1997 and 1998 named the Company one of the Top 100 Federal Information Technology Contractors. Mr. Soza was named 1998 Businessman of the Year by the U.S. Hispanic Chamber of Commerce.

Soza emphasizes to its potential clients not only that it delivers results, and delivers fast, but that the customer "can respect and trust" the company's efforts. This personal note traces directly to the views of its founder, who remains personally involved in the daily operations. His strategy to take his already successful business and make it more successful, more competitive, and more productive through the SBA 8(a) program highlights an often over-looked aspect of the program.

For more information on Soza & Company, contact:

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Sytel, Incorporated and Jeannette Lee White

Jeannette Lee founded Sytel, Inc. in 1987. Twelve years later, Sytel has 286 employees headquartered in Bethesda, Maryland, and located throughout the United States at



Jeannette Lee White various customer and subcontractor sites.

Sytel, Inc. performs a full range of electronic business or e-business services including e-business strategy, networking and IT consulting, Internet application development, and web/legacy migration and integration. Sytel points with pride to its recent acquisition of the Palo Alto, California, Creative Networks Inc. (CNI), as the newest demonstration of its constant efforts to prepare itself to serve its customers' needs, ready to meet a need when it first arises.

Sytel, which graduated from the 8(a) program in June 1998, is one of the most recent 8(a) program graduates featured. Company representatives believe that it probably could have met the revenue generation and contract standards for graduation a year before formal graduation. Since graduation, Sytel has continued to develop, and is a leading provider of network engineering services.

Sytel, began its 8(a) program efforts in government technology support services. Their experience base in this area - including numerous FAA contracts — allowed it to parley that technology work, "which was more than cutting edge enough for the commercial sector," when coupled with its concentrated focus, into network infrastructure support with a demonstrable experience base.

Sytel attributes having made the transition from the 8(a) program easily because it prepared early, kept its focus, and recognized that, in preparing to enter more and more into private sector work, it had to commit to a significant investment in

sales and marketing. When asked what advice Sytel would give those in the 8(a) program or those just entering, the reply was to maximize experiences in government and then build a record of performance.

Sytel credits its management team as crucial to its success, enabling the company to make strategic changes and to recommend needed changes to their clients before the client became aware of a need. Sytel's rapid turn around in execution and strategic thinking have made it possible for the company to move easily from government contracting work to private sector firms by illustrating a value-added inducement of management excellence.

Sytel has been selected as one of only



53 companies worldwide to be inducted into the Inc. 500 Hall of Fame. Inc. 500 has featured Sytel on its list five times, and also named it one of 1998's fastest-growing companies. Also in 1998, Sytel, Inc. won The Washington Business Journal -Arthur Andersen, Riggs National Bank - Gady McGrath

International's Fast Track Award and was recognized by Government Computer News as one of the Top Ten Minority Owned Federal Government Contractors.

At the same time Jeannette Lee White, Sytel's President and CEO, was named by Success Magazine as one of the "Top Entrepreneurs in the United States." Sytel, while one of the smaller and more recent of the graduates, has a spectacular record in achieving public recognition of its business performance.

For more information on Sytel, Inc., contact:

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As the United States confronts the next century, disadvantaged and women-owned business enterprises which put themselves in a position to take advantage of DBE certification and operate within the 8(a) Program can take both heart and guidance from these five examples. There are many

routes to success. But, as Ms. Williams aptly observed, if the business people each know their own weaknesses, they should also know his or her strength. With hard work and belief in themselves, they can be the success stories for the new millennia.

Each of these people and their companies share common themes: strong commitment to customer service, identification and focus on their strengths, and use of the 8(a) program time period to plan and initiate actions to prepare for the future. In addition, each of them in his or her way also quite simply worked hard.

DOT salutes each of these companies, their employees, and their "disadvantaged" owners. They have individually and collectively proven their own worth and that of the 8(a) program.

For more information on the 8(a) program view the SBA website at: <http://www.sba.gov/med/>.

For more information on a variety of certification programs, view the September 1999 edition of the Transportation Link at <http://osdbuweb.dot.gov/translink/sept99/index1.htm>

Streamlined Certification

On November 23, the Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Small Business Administration (SBA) signed an



agreement that will make it easier than ever for eligible firms to participate in the government's programs for disadvantaged businesses. This agreement streamlines the certification process for disadvantaged businesses that want to participate in contacts offered by the federal government and those available on federally funded state and local transportation projects. Most small businesses that have qualified

for disadvantaged status through one agency's certification process will now qualify for the other's without going through another round of extensive paperwork and examination. In most cases, all that will be required will be a brief supplemental statement confirming the eligibility requirements. The goal is to eventually have a uniform federal application for securing disadvantaged status.

Approximately 8,000 small firms are



certified by SBA as Small Disadvantaged Businesses (SDBs) while approximately

50,000 small socially and economically disadvantaged firms have secured DOT's Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) certification from dot-assisted state and local transportation agencies.

To learn more about this agreement, read the DOT press release at <http://osdbuweb.dot.gov/business/legislation/memopress.html> or view the agreement at <http://osdbuweb.dot.gov/business/legislation/legislat.html#mou>

To learn more about certifications, view the September 1999 Transportation Link article at <http://osdbuweb.dot.gov/translink/sept99/index1.htm#TOC1>

SBA Online Library

The Small Business Administration (SBA) has a very informative Online Library on their web site at <http://www.sba.gov/library/>

The Library is comprised of "Reading Rooms" that include Laws and Regulations, Forms, Reports etc.

Of particular interest is their extensive collection of Publications to assist the small business community. Included are hundreds of documents ranging from "Developing a Strategic Plan" to "Avoiding Patent, Trademark and Copyright Problems."

The Publications Section located at <http://www.sba.gov/library/pubs.html> is divided into the following four categories:

- Small Business Management Series
- SBA Fact Sheets
- Workbooks
- Success Series

Each document is provided in three file formats: Word 97, Text, PDF.

Whether you are starting a new business, or trying to maintain the competitive edge of an existing business, there is a lot to learn in the SBA Online Library.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS FOR January/February 2000

DATE	EVENT	CONTACT
Every 2nd & 4th Tuesday	One-On-One Informational Session Designed to Answer Questions on Gaining Grants/Contacts through the SBIR and STTR programs. Washington, D.C. Sponsored by SBA	Darrell Williams (202) 887-6709
February 8-9	The White House Community Empowerment Contracting and Procurement Opportunity Fair Washington, D.C.	Brenda Preston 1-800-532-1169 X66397
February 11	9th Annual Conference on Savings, Investments and Small Business Loan Opportunities 2000 Presented by the Black Businesses & Professional Networks, Inc. Washington, D.C. Sponsored by SBA	(703) 370-0706 Email: bbpn@starpower.net

<http://osdbuweb.dot.gov>

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